

Message Text

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41

ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY COTONOU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8437

C O N F I D E N T I A L COTONOU 0734

EXDIS

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, US, DM

SUBJ: SECRETARY'S AND SISCO'S MEETING WITH BENINESE FOREIGN

MINISTER: THE RESIDENCE ISSUE

REF (A) STATE 100005, (B) COTONOU 452,

1. FORNMINISTER ALLADAYE'S STATEMENT TO THE SECRETARY INDICATING THAT THE GPRB WISHES US TO BUILD A NEW RESIDENCE IS THE FIRST OFFICIAL WORD WE HAVE RECEIVED THAT USG MUST VACATE PRESENT ONE. AS REPORTED REF B, PRES KEREKOU TOLD GEN CHRISTOPHE SOGLO (LANDLORD OF OUR CHANCERY COMPLEX) ON MARCH 11 THAT THE GPRB INTENDED TO SEIZE THE AMB'S RESIDENCE "IN THE NEAR FUTURE."

2. ON JAN 8 WE RECEIVED A DIP NOTE INFORMING US OF THE CONFISCATION OF THE RESIDENCE BY GPRB. NOTE INDICATED THAT RENTAL PAYMENT FOR THE RESIDENCE SHOULD BE MADE TO A GPRB BANK ACCOUNT RETROACTIVE TO 26 OCT 1975, AND ASKED IF WE WISHED TO SIGN A NEW LEASE EFFECTIVE JAN 1 (SUBJECT TO GPRB DECISION AS TO ITS DESIRABILITY). BY NOTE DATED 13 FEB, THE EMBASSY INFORMED THE GPRB THAT WE WERE INTERESTED IN A NEW LEASE BUT AS WE HAD PAID RENTAL TO THE FORMER LANDLORD THROUGH 1 AUG 1976, THIS COULD ONLY BE CONSIDERED AS OF THAT DATE. OUR NOTE STIPULATED THAT WE PRESUMED TERMS WOULD BE THE SAME AS THOSE OF THE OLD LEASE. THERE HAS BEEN NO RESPONSE TO THAT NOTE, NOR HAS ANY GPRB OFFICIAL EVER RAISED THE RESIDENCE QUESTION WITH US.

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3. ANY GPRB REQUEST TO LEAVE THE RESIDENCE SHOULD BE VIEWED AS EITHER ANOTHER CASE OF INTENTIONAL HARASSMENT OR, MORE PROBABLY AN ILL-CONCEIVED DESPERATION MOVE TO GET US TO INJECT SOME CAPITAL INVESTMENT INTO BENIN'S DEAD ECONOMY. (FYI: THIS OVE WOULD BE SIMILIAR TO THE ORDER GIVEN THIS MONTH TO RESIDENTS OF LEBANESE AND INDO-PAKISTANI ORIGIN TO BUILD A SUPERMARKET AND APARTMENT BUILDING OR BE KICKED OUT OF THE COUNTRY).

4. GPRB WOULD HAVE NO LOGICAL JUSTIFICATION FOR REQUIRING US TO BUILD A NEW RESIDENCE. THE PRESENT ONE IS ONE OF THE NICEST RESIDENCES IN ALL COTONOU. IT IS ONLY ABOUT THREE YEARS OLD. FURTHERMORE, AND MORE IMPORTANTLY, IT IS LOCATED IN THE AREA PRESUMABLY DESIGNATED FOR THE FUTURE DIPLOMATIC ENCLAVE. THE RESIDENCE PROPERTY IS ADJACENT TO THE LAND PROVIDED BY THE GPRB FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE NIGERIAN CHANCERY AND RESIDENCE.

5. FYI: EMBASSY HAS NO INFO RE THE CONFISCATION OF THE CHINESE RESIDENCE. HOWEVER, REGARDING THE WEST GERMANS, ALLADAYE HAD HIS FACTS CONFUSED. THE WEST GERMAN RESIDENCE HAS NOT RPT NOT BEEN CONFISCATED. IT BELONGS TO FORMER PRES HUBERT MAGA, WHO HAS BEEN UNDER HOUSE ARREST SINCE 1972 AND IS NOT AMONG THE "COUP PLOTTERS" MENTIONED BY ALLADAYE. THE WEST GERMAN CHANCERY WAS OWNED BY FORMER PRES EMILE ZINSOU. AS WITH OUR RESIDENCE, OWNERSHIP WAS TAKEN OVER BY THE GOVT ON OCT 26, 1975. THE WEST GERMANS RECEIVED A NOTE IDENTICAL TO THE ONE WE RECEIVED (SEE PARA 2 ABOVE), TO WHICH THEY RESPONDED THAT THEY WOULD LIKE TO RENEW THE LEASE WITH THE GPRB ON THE SAME TERMS AS THEY HAD WITH ZINSOU. THAT REPLY WAS SENT TO THE GPRB FORNMINISTRY IN JAN. THE WEST GERMAN EMBASSY HAS HEARD NOTHING FURTHER ON THE SUBJECT SINCE THEN. WEST GERMAN AMB (HELDT) DOES NOT BELIEVE THAT THE FRG WILL BE WILLING TO BUILD A NEW CHANCERY.

6. COMMENT: EMBASSY DISAPPOINTED BY ALLADAYE'S STRANGE PERFORMANCE. IT APPEARS THAT RATHER THAN CLEARING UP OUTSTANDING ISSUES, HE HAS COMPLICATED MATTERS BY DROPPING THE RESIDENCE ISSUE IN OUR LAPS. ALLADAYE MADE NO FIRM COMMITMENTS. GPRB ATTITUDE AND FUTURE ACTIONS ON ALL OUTSTANDING PROBLEMS WILL UNDOUBTEDLY

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HINGE ON THE USG'S RESPONSE ON THE EXTENSION OF THE 15 MAY DEADLINE ON THE BRIDGE PROJECT.
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